

**MOULTONBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAU #45**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL AND
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Mr. Michael Lancor, Superintendent

**Mr. Louis Goscinski, Director
Pupil Personnel Services**

**WITH APRECIATION AND RECOGNITION TO
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL AND IMPROVEMENT
DISTRICT TEAM MEMBERS**

**Kathy Brett
Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu
Cheri Cahoon
Laurie Caldwell
Sharon Conkling
Gabe Couture
Diane Coveny
Elaine Dodge
Lou Goscinski
Doris Hall
Christine Hofling
Carolyn Ippolito
Carol Kosnitsky
Michael Lancor
Amanda Lombardi
Christine Maggio
Chele Miller
Cathy Nilson
Carissa O'Gara
Aimee Quinn
Peter Whelley
Pam Wyatt**

September, 2002

**MOULTONBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
SAU #45**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL AND
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Mr. Michael Lancor, Superintendent

**Mr. Louis Goscinski, Director
Pupil Personnel Services**

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	Page 1
II.	Compliance Visit.....	Page 5
III.	Program Approval Review Process.....	Page 5
IV.	SAU-Wide Summary of Findings.....	Page 7
V.	Special Education Improvement.....	Page 9
VI.	The Data Collection Process and Results.....	Page 10
VII.	Attachments A-F	

MOULTONBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

SAU #45

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

The Moultonborough School District is committed to continuous improvement in all education programs and services it offers to every student enrolled in the district. For the past three years students, parents, community members, teachers and administrators have participated on two BEST School Teams designed to improve the overall educational system. For the past two years Moultonborough Academy has participated in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges self evaluation process. The Moultonborough Central School has been recognized as a Blue Ribbon School and is completing a three-year curriculum-mapping project for all subjects and grade levels.

The district recently completed a Special Education Program Approval and Improvement Process during the 2001-2002 school year. Prior to its participation, the district engaged in a self -assessment of district-wide special education programs and services. A spring retreat was held in 2001 to help district personnel target areas for improvement. Since that time, the district has made outstanding progress in meeting NHDOE compliance requirements and providing resources to meet the needs of students with special education needs. The district is committed to continue this trend and has developed a five-year improvement plan. Implementation of the plan, approved by the Moultonborough School Board on September 10, 2002, has begun.

SAU #45 is comprised of a single school district, Moultonborough New Hampshire. The district has one K-6 elementary school, Moultonborough Central School (which houses the integrated special needs preschool program), and one middle/high school, grades 7-12, Moultonborough Academy. The total enrollment (K-12) for SAU# 45 is 704 students, which includes 125 children and youth (ages 3-21) identified as having an educational disability. This translates to 17.8 % of the student population being identified as having some kind of educational disability, which is significantly higher than the state average of 14.8%.

The mission statement for SAU#45 is:

The purpose of the Moultonborough Schools is to recognize potential, nurture personal development, build social responsibility, and promote economic preparedness in an atmosphere of equal opportunity and mutual respect. We will accomplish this by:

- Promoting intellectual curiosity and high standards of academic achievement.
- Fostering local, national and global perspectives and the flexibility to adapt in a rapidly changing world.
- Emphasizing essential content and the ability to access analyze and utilize information.
- Recognizing the importance of how we learn, as well as what we learn.
- Providing for our students' broad range of abilities, talents, and interests.

- Providing each of our students with educational experiences that contribute to success and self-esteem.
- Promoting the ability to work independently and cooperatively.
- Creating an atmosphere in which all are empowered, trusted and encouraged to take positive risks.

Numerous recognitions have been issued to the Moultonborough School District. In 1995 the SAU was selected to pilot the NHDOE Special Education Program Approval and Improvement Process, and in 1999 the district was selected to participate in the first cohort group of the Governor's Best Schools Leadership Institute. In 2001, Moultonborough Academy was again selected to participate in the Best Schools initiative, and is one of only fourteen high schools to pilot Competency Based Transcripts and Assessments (CBT and CBA). The New Hampshire state assessments (NHEIAP) have become a familiar part of the Moultonborough School District and, overall, students enrolled in SAU#45 perform better across grade levels and subject areas than other NH School Districts. The school staff is serious about using the NHEIAP information to look at the district's instructional programs and to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. It should also be noted that the SAU is proud of their ability to track students who graduate from Moultonborough Academy, and is recognized for their low dropout rate of 1.6% during the 2001 school year. The SAU has worked hard in recent years to develop and design a full continuum of services for children and youth with disabilities, including an integrated district preschool program for youngsters with educational disabilities.

Upon visiting each of the schools in SAU#45, it became clear that there is a supportive, enthusiastic atmosphere for the provision of services in the least restrictive environment. This enthusiasm and support is fostered throughout the SAU by faculty, administration, support service personnel, secretarial staff, students and parents. In many ways it was clear that educators, parents and the community work together to offer a wide continuum of program options for all students. It was also evident that students with disabilities are involved in all aspects of school life, including extra- curricular activities, athletics, clubs and many non-traditional after school learning opportunities.

Professional development is ongoing through many different initiatives such as The Best Schools Leadership Institute, Safe Schools, the NHDOE Special Education Approval and Improvement Process, the Special Education Automation Software Program Training, Partnerships with Plymouth State College, and Project Safeguard, among many others. Technology has been, and continues to be, a resource for all staff and students. Technology, both hardware and software, is available to all students, and teachers utilize technology as an instructional tool. All professional staff members are provided with a computer and access to the District's Internet both in school and at their homes. Lastly, and probably most important, all the staff and administration of SAU#45 were consistently described as the "cream of the crop", and "outstanding guides and role models for children". Within the Moultonborough School District, it was clear that the community is committed to providing quality services for all children, including meeting the individual needs of children and ensuring that youngsters are active and productive participants in their own learning.

II. COMPLIANCE VISIT

The New Hampshire Department of Education conducted a Special Education Program Approval Visit in SAU#45 on April 8-9, 2002 for the purpose of assessing the present status of programs and services made available to children and youth with educational disabilities. As part of the Program Approval Review, both of the schools in SAU#45 were visited, including Moultonborough Central School and Moultonborough Academy.

Activities related to this Program Approval Review included the evaluation of all application materials submitted by the SAU, verification of personnel credentials for special education staff, program descriptions, SPEDIS reports, and analysis of data collected during the visit. Data included the review of student case studies, interviews with staff, administrators, students and parents as well as classroom observations. Throughout the entire review process, the visiting team worked in collaboration with the staff of SAU#45; their professionalism, active involvement in the process and cooperation were greatly appreciated and well recognized.

III. PROGRAM APPROVAL REVIEW PROCESS

The New Hampshire Department of Education provided SAU#45 with a team of professional educators to work collaboratively with staff in each of the schools in conducting the data collection and special education program approval activities. The two-day visit was designed as a focused review on the following areas of programming:

- Access to the General Curriculum
- Transition
- Assessment

The NHDOE Special Education Compliance Review Process allowed the visiting and building level team members to conduct case studies of a representative sampling of the special education student population, ages 3-21, throughout the SAU. Evidence of the work conducted in-district and results related to student outcomes was gathered throughout the process, guided by the materials and templates provided by the NHDOE, Bureau of Special Education. Examples of evidence included student individual education plans (IEPs), progress reports, samples of student work, grades, extra- curricular involvement, permanent records, curriculum, etc. Input was gathered from key constituents, including interviews with professional staff, parents, paraprofessionals, administrators, and in some cases the students. In addition, classroom observations were conducted for each of the case studies being reviewed.

Visiting Team Members:

Stacy Buckley	Director of Special Education
Amy Burnap	Guidance Counselor
Arlene Corso	Special Educator
Joseph Denning	Education Consultant
Todd Dimmick	Guidance Counselor
JoEllen Divoll	Director of Special Education
Irene Dwyer	Preschool Coordinator
Meg Maroni	Assessment Specialist
Amanda Martin	Intern, Plymouth State College
Frank Sherburne	Director of Special Education

District Level Team Members:

Mary-Ellen Azem	Elementary Special Educator
Lynda Boyd	Speech-Language Pathologist
Gabe Couture	Academy Special Educator
Judy Crosbie	Academy Special Educator
Chris Dallabetta	Elementary Special Educator
Elaine Dodge	Academy Special Educator
Maria Fair	Special Needs Preschool Teacher
Louis Goscinski	Director of Special Education
Art Grady	Academy Teacher
Ellen Hamilton	Elementary Teacher
Dawn Law	Academy Teacher
Jean Meloney	Academy Teacher
Cathy Nilson	Occupational Therapist
Chip Nyhan	Academy Teacher
Carissa O’Gara	Elementary Special Educator
Kim Prause	Academy Teacher
Dan Reidy	Elementary Teacher
Frank Renew	Behavioral Specialist
Jeanne Rudzinski	Academy Special Educator
Jim Stackhouse	Elementary Teacher
Peter Whelley	School Psychologist

IV. SAU-WIDE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The visiting team thanks the staff and administration of SAU# 45 for their assistance, cooperation, and participation in all aspects of the April 2002 NHDOE Special Education Program Approval Compliance Review. Although many praiseworthy things are happening in the Moultonborough School District, there was one area of concern that surfaced which was related to facilities.

Upon visiting each of the schools, it became apparent the SAU needs to address the crowded conditions at both Moultonborough Central School and Moultonborough Academy. At this time the schools are beyond capacity and there is not sufficient space to accommodate the needs and learning activities of the children. While the visiting team is aware that the community is working to improve facilities, and that voters approved funds to move forward with engineering studies and architectural designs, crowded conditions continue to be an area of significant concern. What the visiting team saw was inadequate space for conducting student evaluations, instruction and provision of related services to students with disabilities. Within both schools there are crowded conditions in classrooms, and during the program approval visit, services and instruction were observed being provided on the stage, in the cafeteria, the library, the hallways, former storage closets and in the basement. Some of the instructional areas have insufficient lighting and ventilation, as well as excessive noise from the water pump, and/or from the cafeteria that is directly above. In several classrooms there is a constant flow of traffic because traveling through an attached classroom is the only access to the room. To further complicate matters, some hallways are being used as storage areas for books, coats, backpacks and instructional supplies. Unfortunately, the integrity of the special education programs and services in SAU#45 is being compromised due to space constraints, and in some situations, space issues guide program decisions and development, and the writing of IEPs.

Other than the facilities and overcrowded conditions in the schools, the visiting team was very impressed with the wide array of programming made available to all children in SAU#45. Specialized methodologies are being utilized for most all children and special education is being carried out in the true spirit of the

law. Each of the schools has achieved a considerable level of success in the implementation of inclusionary practices, despite the challenge of crowded conditions, and many praiseworthy things are happening in both special and regular education. The attitude of the educational community is to provide the quality services for all students, regardless of their ability levels. The visiting team would like to recognize and reinforce the philosophy, vision and beliefs of SAU#45 and commend them for their support of high standards for all learners.

V. SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Since the beginning of September 2001, the Moultonborough School District engaged in a school year long Special Education Program Approval and Improvement Process. The NH Department of Education and the Southeastern Regional Education Service Center, Inc. (SERESC) developed the approval process collaboratively. The Moultonborough School District was one of fifteen statewide pilot school districts that combined federal and state special education compliance requirements with local school district improvement initiatives.

The Moultonborough School District formed a Special Education Program Approval Committee composed of students, parents, teachers, special education staff and school administrators. The committee met on numerous occasions including after school, on early dismissal days, and for one teacher workshop day. The first task of the committee was to formulate a focus question for the school district to study. The committee settled on the following question:

“How can we improve and integrate the use of our present resources to ensure that regular and special education staff collaboratively meet the needs of all students?”

After identify the focus question, the committee broke into three subcommittees to conduct research and collect data to answer the focus question. The subcommittees included:

- School Resources
- Time Utilization
- Perceptual Information on Roles and Collaboration

The committees assessed the organizational structures of departments, course of studies, and the quality of time scheduled for special education staff and teachers to meet. In addition, the subcommittees assessed student, parent, and staff satisfaction of collaboration with respect to the education of students with educational disabilities. Specific subcommittee membership, structure and responsibilities are detailed under attachments A1 – A3.

VI. THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS AND RESULTS

Moultonborough’s Special Education Program Approval and Improvement Committee identified three data collection strategies to answer its focus question. The strategies included surveys, interviews, and a comprehensive review of district programs, personnel and current education practices.

The subcommittees collected and reviewed available school data including the allocation of staff time, curriculum standards, and student individual education plans. In addition, the subcommittees

conducted surveys and interviews of students, parents, and staff to use in conjunction with existing data.

The information collected by each subcommittee was categorized into a data matrix. Three data matrices were compiled and named after their corresponding subcommittee. Each matrix was used to capture the strengths, target areas and findings of the various data collection activities and appear as attachments B1 – B8. Included with the perceptual matrix is the result of a student survey and appears as attachments B9 – B11.

At its second to last meeting, the full committee analyzed all of the data matrices and organized the information into three major themes for improvement. Each theme is directly related to each of the following national purposes and priorities of the Program Approval and Improvement Process:

- Access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities
- Meaningful and effective transition planning and services for students with disabilities
- The use of assessment results for promotion of research-based practice, high academic standards for students with disabilities and accountability of outcomes

After this meeting, the Director of Special Education categorized all of the evidence of data for each identified theme reviewed by the full committee and appears as attachments C1 – C5. The full committee approved this document at its last official meeting. The information in this document was used to guide the development of Moultonborough's Special Education Improvement Plan. The plan was approved by the Moultonborough School Board on September 10, 2002 and appears as attachments D1 – D8.

Outcomes of the Special Education Program Approval and Improvement Process have been embedded into the district's two Best Schools Initiatives. Please review attachment E1 – E3 entitled, "Minutes of the Best Schools Team Meeting Tuesday, May 21, 2002". The minutes were presented to the Moultonborough School Board, at its regularly scheduled meeting, on June 11, 2002. This document demonstrates the integration of the district's special education priorities with existing regular education initiatives.

The Special Education Improvement Plan and the middle-school/high school NEASC accreditation self-study are the two district priorities that will drive the district's comprehensive Professional Development Master Plan for the next five years. The district's professional development plan has been identified as a model for other School Administrative Units in New Hampshire. Please see attachment F for evidence documenting this.

The Special Education Program Improvement Plan will support the district's efforts to successfully implement the comprehensive Professional Development Master Plan and sustain the project for years to come. Moreover, the plan demonstrates the district's commitment to embed special education and related services for students with disabilities into the overall culture of the school district.

MOULTONBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT'S SPECIAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

<u>GOAL</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>OVERSIGHT</u>	<u>TIMELINE</u>	<u>EVALUATION</u>
1) To Expand continuum hired of programs, services and instructional practices	a) Provide Title I services to grades 4-6	Administrative Team (A-Team)	9/02	-New teacher -Aides reassigned
	b) Create child study teams	A-Team	1/03	Teams established
	c) Create pre-referral/SPED referral tracking system	Director of Pupil Personnel Services (DPPS)	1/03	Evidence of system
	d) Purchase 10 computers for SPED Students From IDEA Grant	DPPS	10/02	Evidence of computers
	e) Develop a Technology replacement plan	DPPS & Technology Coordinator	9/03	Evidence of plan
	f) Develop a System-Wide transition\protocol for students	A-Team	6/03	Evidence of protocol
	g) Create a resource manual for staff on student services and disseminate	DPPS	6/03	Evidence of manual

MOULTONBOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT'S SPECIAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

<u>GOAL</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>OVERSIGHT</u>	<u>TIMELINE</u>	<u>EVALUATION</u>
	h) Create a plan for additional space for SPED programs	A-Team	1/03	Evidence of Plan
	i) Evaluate math course offerings to students at MA	A-Team & Math Dept Chair	9/03	Written Report
	j) Provide substitutes for regular education teachers to attend IEP meetings, as per Sliver sub-grant, and assess effectiveness	DPPS	9/02 – 6/03	Written Report
	k) Provide substitutes for staff to cooperatively develop schedules at MA as per Sliver sub-grant, and assess effectiveness	DPPS	9/02 – 6/03	Written Report
	l) Assess the needs of low achievers and gifted students and make recommendations	A-Team	6/04	Written Report